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BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS

REPORT OF THE AD HOC PANEL

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PART A. BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with decision 22/COP.1 (ICCD/COP(1)/11/Add.1) of the first session of the Conference of the Parties, the Ad Hoc Panel on Benchmarks and Indicators was convened in Beijing, China from 20-22 May 1998. The Ad Hoc Panel was subsequently convened with the involvement of participants in the informal process referred to in that decision in Geneva from 1-3 September 1998. Both meetings were chaired by Professor Ju Hongbo of China.

2. The members of the Ad Hoc Panel and the participants in the informal process present at the Geneva meeting are listed in annex I.

3. In its decision 22/COP.1, the Conference of the Parties recalled the informal process initiated by the secretariat in accordance with decision 9/12 of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Desertification (INCD) and continued pursuant to INCD decision 10/9 which brought together international, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and interested INCD members for the examination of benchmarks and indicators relevant to the Convention.

4. At its first session, the Conference of the Parties appointed the Ad Hoc Panel to act as a steering committee to oversee the continuation of the informal process and requested the interim secretariat in consultation with the Ad Hoc Panel to continue the informal process for the purpose of:

(a) Reviewing the methodology for impact indicators contained in ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1; and

(b) Determining how the methodology could be carried out and whether it could be recommended for use by the Conference of the Parties.

PART B. REVIEW OF METHODOLOGY CONTAINED IN ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/ADD.1

5. At its Beijing and Geneva meetings, the Ad Hoc Panel reviewed the methodology contained in ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1 and recommends that consideration be given to the integration of the following general elements arising from Beijing meeting:

(a) Emphasis on indicators which would provide information on the cost of desertification and the effects of drought;

(b) Emphasis on indicators which would provide information on economic and social benefits to the populations of affected areas of successfully combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought;

(c) Emphasis on indicators related to gender issues;

(d) Emphasis to be placed on developing indicators capable of predicting the impact of future environmental and natural changes;

(e) Emphasis to be placed on the importance of capacity-building in development of indicators;

(f) Inclusion of thresholds, ranges and limits in the development of indicators;

and the following additional specific elements arising from the Geneva meeting:

(g) Given the lack of capacities of some countries to undertake the inventories referred to in paragraph 10 of document ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1, support should be sought from partners;

(h) Actors referred to in paragraph 11 (b)(i) of that document should include decision-makers. At the local level, actors may come from any sectors affected by desertification;

(i) In the context of paragraph 11 (b)(ii) of that document, scientific and technical capacities should be sought from all relevant sources, including research organizations, to provide support at all levels;

(j) In the context of applying paragraph 13 of that document, advantage should be taken of existing reliable data including those developed in the context of other Conventions and by other relevant organizations with a view to achieving synergies, minimizing costs, reducing the time to collect the data, and preventing duplication of effort;

(k) Comparability referred to in paragraph 14 of that document should be ensured across subregions as well;

(l) Results and indicators referred to in paragraph 14 (e) of that document could be presented in maps and other forms;

(m) The purpose of whatever process is applied to the indicators after their production in the context of paragraph 14 (f) would be to allow decision-makers to achieve the overall objectives for which these indicators have been produced;

(n) The overall principle to be applied in the context of paragraph 19 of that document should be the partnership/consultative approaches contained in the Convention, involving all actors, and in applying this principle, a variety of methods and systems can be employed.

PART C. IMPLEMENTATION OF METHODOLOGY CONTAINED IN ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/ADD.1

6. Periodically the indicators of the monitoring systems should be updated in order to incorporate new variables or new approaches allowing for a better monitoring capacity, while at the same time maintaining the ability to look at long-term trends and ensuring continuity between existing and new indicators. Gathering new information or suggestions makes possible continuous improvement of the system to adapt it better to changes or new conditions created by desertification dynamics. This justifies the creation of a process of continuous consultation involving various actors, ranging from land users at a local level to decision-makers acting at all levels.

7. These actors will provide information seen from various perspectives and scales. The pragmatic vision of the local population may be contrasted with the long-term vision of planners, and the global vision of those having the responsibility for sub-national and national development. Each group of actors will provide and receive available information to form a realistic and comprehensive perception of problems created by desertification. Consultation at any level will require emphasis to be placed on the bottom-up approach, and a recognition of the need for flows of information in both directions between (a) the land user and those directly affected by desertification, and (b) the relevant institutions and agencies.

8. An operational system of consultation is likely to include the following components:

(a) A comprehensive and participative analysis of what kind(s) of information are required by which actors and for what purpose;

(b) An analysis of what information or information-generating capacity currently exists;

(c) The identification of, and a process for getting agreement on, the indicators upon which the system should be based;

(d) The prioritization of needs for information and the related infrastructure required for the gathering of such information;

(e) Capacity-building at all levels;

(f) A clear articulation of the institution(s) responsible for establishing, maintaining and running the monitoring system at all levels;

(g) A process of overall self-evaluation at the national and sub-national levels of the effectiveness of monitoring systems.

9. Such a system of consultation would benefit from the articulation of several elements (listed below not necessarily in sequential order) to implement the process, such as:

Element 1: Establishing a procedure to collect information

10. Considering the various types of information to be provided by the different groups of actors, distinct surveys should be prepared: a) the local population will be required to give information about their perception of changes in the environment and natural resources, the immediate consequences of these changes on land productivity, and how they are dealing with these problems; b) local authorities should prioritize any problems related to these changes and the corresponding indicators from the point of view of managers of local policies; c) sub-national and national authorities are encouraged to answer questions as to how they are addressing the problems and their consequences (indicators and policies); d) the scientific community is invited to participate in the process of developing indicators best suited for understanding phenomena and the most significant for predicting long-term changes; and e) information could be solicited from other relevant institutions and individuals.

Element 2: Developing the process of consultation and selecting a set of global indicators

11. To start the process, consultations should first be undertaken. Resulting information will serve as working material to be analysed in national workshops, involving relevant expertise, e.g. from government ministries and agencies, institutions, non-governmental and community-based organizations, independent experts and other relevant actors. All parties and regions are encouraged to undertake processes at the national and regional levels in the near future to develop sets of indicators, their associated formats, scales and sources of information. A similar process at the international level should then be established to develop a global set of indicators. Information generated by this process at the international level (selected indicators, sources of information in each region, formats, scales, collecting procedures, participating institutions) could be submitted for compilation by the secretariat of the CCD, once authorized by the COP. Parties are invited to maintain periodic consultation with a view to updating information derived from the processes outlined in elements 1 and 3.

Element 3: Promoting a mechanism to evaluate applicability of indicators

12. National authorities are invited to establish a relevant mechanism to conduct a periodic evaluation of the applicability of current indicators and monitoring systems, and suggest improvements to them if necessary. A similar periodic evaluation should also be carried out at the regional level bearing in mind the national nature of the process of application of the indicators.

Element 4: Promoting institutional and technical capacities

13. Parties are invited to promote institutional and technical capacities to compile, organize, analyse critically and form conclusions from information derived from the system of indicators. Parties are also invited to designate an institution to take the responsibility for this task in collaboration with several others, in order to: a) form a national consultative mechanism on desertification indicators; b) have the task of managing the national Desertification Monitoring System (DMS); c) lead the process of capacity building; and d) facilitate technology transfer.

Element 5: Maintaining the consultative process

14. Each party shall insure: a) the articulation of institutional capacities within each country; b) the establishment of the technological capacity to implement and manage the DMS, including processing of information from periodic consultation; c) the efficient use of existing resources so as to minimize cost and efforts; d) the creation of a board of collaborating institutions from each country; and e) the submission of periodic information as part of national reporting to the CCD secretariat and through existing channels.

PART D. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

15. The Ad Hoc Panel recommends to the Conference of the Parties:

a) To adopt the methodological framework for impact indicators outlined in ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1, taking into account the results of the Beijing and Geneva meetings as summarized in Part B;

(b) To adopt the implementation process contained in Part C;

(c) To apply the framework and the implementation process which should be undertaken at all levels, sub-national, national, subregional, regional, and global;

(d) To mobilize resources as soon as possible to support the capacities of Governments and relevant organizations to report on the utility of the indicators and the practicality of using them to subsequent sessions of COP, consistent with paragraph 2 of decision 22/COP.1.

16. The Ad Hoc Panel further recommends the undertaking of catalytic activities to test and refine the methodological framework and process of implementation.

PART E. ASSISTANCE IN IMPLEMENTATION

17. The Ad Hoc Panel recommends that developed country Parties, the United Nations and international, regional, and interregional organizations should be invited to assist the affected country Parties in implementing the methodology for the application of the impact indicators to be proposed for adoption by the COP.

PART F. DOCUMENTS

18. Included in the documents submitted for consideration by the Ad Hoc Panel and the informal process were those listed in annex II.

Annex I

MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC PANEL ON BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS APPOINTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Prof. Ju Hongbo	China
Prof. Hassan Ahmadi	Iran
Prof. Abdelkarim Ben Mohamed	Niger
Prof. Cristobal Félix Diaz Morejón	Cuba
Dr. Abdessalem Kallala	Tunisia
Prof. Tereza Mendizabal	Spain
Dr. Heitor Matallo Junior	Brazil
Dr. Christian Valentin	France

PARTICIPANTS IN THE INFORMAL PROCESS PRESENT AT THE GENEVA MEETING

Mr. Dimbon Bamba	Ministry of Environment and Water, Burkina Faso
Prof. Gulnar Bekturova	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Kazakhstan
Dr. Debalkew Berhe	Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Djibouti
Mr. Youssef Brahimi	Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), France
Mr. Andrew Campbell	Environment Australia, Australia
Mr. Till Darnhofer	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Kenya
Mr. Peter Gilruth	United Nations Development Programme / Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNDP/UNSO), USA
Mr. Dominique Lantieri	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Italy
Mr. Geoff Pickup	CSIRO Land and Water and UNEP Consultant, Australia
Mr. Ricardo Sanchez-Sosa	Chairman, Committee on Science and Development (CST), Cuba
Mr. V.K. Sivakumar	World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Switzerland
Mr. François Tapsoba	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), Burkina Faso

Annex II

SELECTIVE LIST OF DOCUMENTS AND PAPERS BEFORE THE AD HOC PANEL MEETING AND INFORMAL PROCESS MEETING ON BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS IN GENEVA, 1-3 SEPTEMBER 1998

A. *Selected documents of the Conference of the Parties (COP)*

1. ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3 - Report on ongoing work being done on benchmarks and indicators
2. ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1 - Supplementary report on work on benchmarks and indicators
3. ICCD/COP(1)/11/Add.1 (extract) - Decision 22/COP.1 on benchmarks and indicators

B. *Selected documents of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Desertification (INCD)*

1. A/AC.241/Inf. 4 - Report on ongoing work on benchmarks and indicators

C. *Papers*

1. Technical Proposal on Benchmarks and Impact Indicators (Working Document)
2. Ongoing Work on Benchmarks and Indicators: secretariat
3. Implementation indicators and the methodological approach for impact indicators and evaluation of the CCD: Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)
4. Developing Benchmarks and Indicators, and a Common Approach on Monitoring Desertification in Western Asia: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD)
5. Unified Methodology for Assessing and Monitoring Desertification in Latin America: FAO, UNEP, AGRIMED
6. Impact Indicators and Monitoring-Evaluation for Action Programmes to Combat Desertification (Elements for Pragmatic Approach): OSS
7. Evaluation of process of elaboration of PNEDD/National Action Programme of Niger: OSS
8. Indicators and Benchmarks for Measuring Desertification - View from the Thar Desert
9. Report on Beijing meeting of the Ad Hoc Panel
10. Preliminary Proposals of Indicators for Evaluating and Monitoring Desertification Processes in Latin America and the Caribbean